

# Study shows Italian youths who drink with meals are less often adult problem-drinkers

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Italian youths whose parents allowed them to have alcohol with meals while they were growing up are less likely to develop harmful drinking patterns in the future, according to a new study led by a Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) researcher.

In a paper published in the journal *Addiction, Research and Theory*, a research team led by Lee Strunin, PhD, a professor of community health sciences at BUSPH, detailed their study of the drinking patterns and histories of 160 Italian [adolescents](#) and young adults who identified themselves as regular or heavy drinkers. The authors concluded that the introduction of a moderate amount of [alcohol](#) in a family setting could prevent young people from [binge drinking](#) and nurture healthier drinking behaviors.

"Young people allowed alcohol with meals when growing up were more likely to never drink 5 [or more drinks] or get drunk," the authors wrote. If they did drink more heavily, it was typically at a "later age than participants who weren't allowed alcohol in a family setting."

The researchers interviewed two groups of young people in the Italian regions of Abruzzo and Umbria. One consisted of 80 young adults aged 25-30; the second consisted of 80 adolescents, 16 to 18 years old. "We were fortunate to be able to have such a large study sample to interview to help us understand this phenomenon," said Strunin.

Although the results focused on Italy, Strunin said they could be applied

to different countries and could "assist in the design of policies to reduce [alcohol problems](#) and harmful behavior among young people."

Other reports have also suggested that alcohol introduced in a family setting may reduce alcohol-related [risk behavior](#) among young people, according to Strunin. Part of the reason, she said, could be that when alcohol is allowed, it is in a context in which there is openness about drinking, and moderate drinking with meals is considered normal.

"Youths in these cultures learn to drink more responsibly than their U.S. counterparts because drinking is culturally normative, exposure occurs at a younger age, and alcohol is part of the fabric of family mores," said the report.

It is important to note, the authors wrote, that the study focused on youths and [young adults](#) who drank wine during a meal with their family. "In talking about drinking in the family, we are talking about meal drinking, not sitting down with your child watching the football or baseball game with a six-pack," Strunin said. "The wine drinking is part of the meal."

**More information:** The paper is titled "Familial drinking in Italy: Harmful or protective factors" and is published online at the journal Addiction, Research and Theory at [informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/ ... 09/16066350902867890](https://informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/10.1002/add.23090)

Provided by Boston University

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